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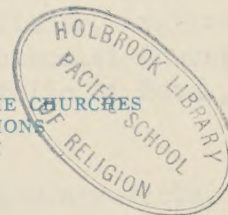
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the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 6

Sixteenth Year

February 11, 1949

Amsterdam Film

The official film of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches is now available. The film runs for 27 minutes and is obtainable in a sound edition, as well as in a silent version. For use with the latter, commentary notes can be purchased.

The film can be bought outright for £13 per sound copy and £8.10.- per silent copy, or it can be hired at 7s.6d. per night. Film-strips on this subject are also available, and can be bought at 7s.6d. per copy.

Application in all cases should be made to Religious Film Ltd., 6 Eaton Gate, London S.W.1. E.P.S. Geneva

INDONESIA

Arrest of a Pastor

On January 24, Pastor Iskandar, one of the leading pastors of the Church of Eastern Java, was arrested by the Dutch police in Soerabaja.

Pastor Iskander has played a considerable role in the Christian community in Soerabaja. While he is an ardent nationalist, he took a stand against the use of force in solving political conflicts. His Church was attended by both Javanese Christians and Dutch soldiers. E.P.S. Geneva

SOUTH AFRICA

Appeal for the Elimination of Racial Tensions

The Christian Council of South Africa adopted a resolution appealing to Christians of all races and denominations to work together for the elimination of racial tensions.

The resolution expressed "horror and dismay" over the recent riots in Durban and offered "sincere sympathy to those of all races who have suffered injury, bereavement, and loss in these disturbances". The resolution urged Christians, regardless of race or denomination, to work together for the elimination of "those conditions of mutual distrust and suspicion that can lead to such outbreaks of violent wickedness".

Meanwhile, the Rev. B.E.L. Sigamoney, leader of the Transvaal Indian organisation, sent telegrams to the Rt. Rev. Leonard N. Fisher, Anglican Bishop of Natal, the Rev. Howard Young, Superintendent of the Methodist Church, and the Most Rev. Denis E. Hurley, Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Natal, asking them to help restore order in Durban.

"On behalf of the Indians in the Transvaal", Sigamoney wrote, "I appeal to you kindly to ask the Christian Churches under young jurisdiction to preach peace, and to help restore good feelings that have existed since 1860."

JAPAN

New Monthly Magazine

"New Age" is the name of a new monthly magazine, published jointly by the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) and the Christian Literature Society of Japan. The monthly is aimed at the general public and seeks to arouse interest in "Christian truth and the Christian way of life".

Among the articles in the first issue are one by Matsuoka Komakichi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, entitled, "How I became a Christian". Also in the issue are reports on the ecumenical movement. E.P.S. Geneva

CANADA

A Mission to the Students

A mission to the students of the University of Toronto, under the auspices of the Canadian Council of Churches, and with full cooperation of the authorities of the University, was held from January 16 - 23, 1949. The chief missionary, Bishop Stephen Neill, Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was assisted by twelve associate missionaries, men and women, representing many different denominations and theological points of view. Large meetings were held each evening in the Convocation Hall, at which attendance grew from 1000 on the first night to nearly 2000 on the last. But these large meetings were not the most important feature of the mission. All the associate missionaries were kept busy night and day in smaller meetings and discussion groups. The students manifested an earnest desire to ask questions, and an open-minded readiness to consider the answers. Almost every part of the life of the University was touched, and, as the mission progressed, the Christian faith became the main subject of discussion wherever students gathered together.

Careful plans have been made for the follow-up of the mission. It is believed that, in addition to the comparatively small number who have made definite decisions for Christ, there will be many who will wish to study the faith more deeply over a longer period of time. The mission surpassed the highest hopes and expectations of those who had planned it; it is believed by those who know the University best that it will have made a lasting impression on the present generation of students. E.P.S. Geneva

A World Day of Prayer

"In this chill hour of the world's indecision, grant mankind the shining courage to follow the difficult road of the Man of Galilee, the Christ of the Calvary - our Lord". These are the closing words of a prayer to be

spoken by Christian women in the Fiji Islands as dawn heralds the arrival of March 4, 1949.

On the same day, the words will be echoed by Christian women of 71 countries in more than 60 languages, as they take part in the 62nd anniversary of the World Day of Prayer. The prayer's final "Amen" will be spoken by Eskimos in the Arctic wastelands and by Micronesians on their tropical islands in the southwest Pacific.

The World Day of Prayer idea originated in 1887. Since 1942, it has been sponsored by the United Council of Church Women, in New York. The organisation represents 10,000,000 church women of 84 Protestant denominations.

The World Day of Prayer will be marked by the hourly ringing of church bells. Hospitals will distribute copies of the prayer to their patients and theatres will project the prayer on the screen. Broadcasts over major networks will urge support of the observance.

The Lord is Thy Keeper", selected by Chinese Christian Women, will serve as the theme. More than 1,500,000 copies of the prayer will be distributed. The prayer will be translated into sixty languages.

The Home Missions Council of North America and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America will distribute the offerings for special projects in America and abroad.

E.P.S. Geneva

International Action for Refugees

Representatives of 49 voluntary agencies working in cooperation with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) in Geneva, urged that governments consider now the measures which will have to be taken for continued international action in the refugee field after mid-1950, when the mandate of IRO is scheduled to end.

"It becomes clear that by July 1, 1950, the problem of displaced persons and refugees will not be solved", the report of the representatives who met with IRO officials declared. "According to the best information and estimates now available there will be a substantial number of displaced persons and refugees for whom some agencies must take responsibility...

"Therefore the representatives meeting at Geneva should undertake immediately to concern themselves with bringing to the attention of member governments of IRO the necessity for some international action prior to the date on which IRO's activities are scheduled to cease".

This action by the representatives followed an address by the Rev. Elfan Rees, director of the Refugee Division of the World Council of Churches, in which he served notice that the voluntary agencies "do not plan to shoulder total responsibility for the continuing refugee problem after 1950...

"We do not have, and we do not anticipate having, those resources in men and money, nor the official status which would enable us to inherit with equanimity the unfinished tasks of IRO", Mr. Rees said. "In the ultimate as in the beginning we are here for the refugee... So long as he exists with his problem unsolved, for just so long must there be an official agency of United Nations to help him..."

The conference met in four sections; resettlement, care and rehabilitation, children and youth, and eligibility and protection.

The section on resettlement expressed the view that the complete solution of the refugee problem is being made more difficult by "the discrimination exercised by governments in the selection of refugees against nationalities, religions and dependents incapable of self-support". The section called upon IRO to continue its efforts to persuade governments to accept for resettlement a fair cross-section of all refugees.

Religious agencies represented at the conference included the following; American Friends' Service Committee, American Joint Distribution Committee, Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, Lutheran World Federation, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Vatican Migration Bureau, World Council of Churches, World Alliance of YMCAs and World's YWCA. E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

General Synod of the VELKD

The General Synod of the United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Germany (VELKD), which had to execute the constitution of the VELKD, assembled in Leipzig from January 25 - 28 30 synodals from the Western Zones and 58 from the Eastern Zone. The Lutheran National Churches of Württemberg, Oldenburg and Lübeck, which have not joined the VELKD, had sent representatives as guests.

The General Synod elected Bishop Meiser of Bavaria as their leading bishop and chairman of the church authorities. Bishop Hahn of Dresden and church councillor Hertrich of Hamburg were nominated as vice-chairmen. A layman, Dr Plötz, was elected as president of the Synod.

The General Synod furthermore unanimously agreed upon a common hymn book for the Lutheran Churches. They also conferred on the establishment of a catechism text valid for all member Churches, and a new order of pericope as well as problems of Christian education and maintenance of parental authority.

With regard to the attitude of the Lutheran Church towards the World Council of Churches, it was on the one hand taken into consideration when discussing this question that the Lutheran Churches as members of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), which is the legal successor of the DEK (German Evangelical Church), are already part of the World Council, furthermore on the other hand, that their confessional character as a Lutheran Church was not sufficiently elucidated by this. The General Synod therefore advised the member Churches of the VELKD to submit a decision to the EKD in order to clarify the

"We do not have, and we do not anticipate having, those resources in men and money, nor the official status which would enable us to identify with any of the unfinished tasks of the UN," Mr. Jones said. "In the meantime as in the beginning we are here for the refugees... As long as he exists with his problem unresolved, for how long must there be an official agency of United Nations to help him..."

The conference met in four sessions: resettlement, work and rehabilitation, children and youth, and eligibility and protection.

The section on resettlement expressed the view that the complete solution of the refugee problem is being made more difficult by the discrimination exercised by governments in the selection of refugees against national, ethnic, religious and dependent individuals of self-support. The section called upon the UN to continue its efforts to persuade governments to accept for resettlement a fair cross-section of all refugees.

Religious agencies represented at the conference included the following: American Friends Service Committee, American Joint Distribution Committee, Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, Lutheran World Federation, National Catholic Welfare Conference, United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Yehuda and Yehuda, and World Council of Churches.

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GERMANY

The General Synod of the United Methodist Church in Germany (VMDG), which had its sessions in the restoration of the VMDG, assembled in Leipzig from January 25 - 28. 30 synodals from the Western Zone and 28 from the Eastern Zone. The Eastern Zone synodals of Wittenberg, Oldenburg, and Hamburg, which had not joined the VMDG, and sent representatives as guests.

The General Synod elected Bishop Walter of Hamburg as its first bishop and chairman of the church authorities. Bishop Hans of Hamburg and church council members of Hamburg were nominated as vice-presidents. A layman, Dr. Fritze, was elected as president of the Synod.

The General Synod furthermore unanimously passed upon a common plan book for the Lutheran Churches. They also continued in the development of a catechism text valid for all member Churches, and a new order of service as well as problems of Christian education and maintenance of pastoral authority.

With regard to the attitude of the Lutheran Church towards the World Council of Churches, it was on the one hand taken into consideration that discussing this question that the Lutheran Churches as members of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD), which is the legal successor of the LK (German Evangelical Church), are already part of the World Council. Furthermore on the other hand, that their confessional character as a Lutheran Church was not sufficient. Therefore, the Lutheran Church in Germany decided to remain a member of the World Council of Churches.

character of their membership, which they would then forward to the World Council. This decision reads as follows:

"The EKD has made clear that following its fundamental order, it is a union of Churches of definite confession. Furthermore, at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam the qualifications for membership of the World Council were determined. Therefore, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of... (name of province) states with regard to its membership of the World Council the following: It is represented at the World Council as a Church of Evangelical Lutheran confession. Their representatives who are sent to the World Council are to be considered as Evangelical Lutheran. Within the limits of the competence of the EKD, this Church can be represented at the World Council through arrangement with the Council of the EKD." E.P.S.Geneva

GREAT BRITAIN

How Many go to Church - And Why

Public opinion polls recently undertaken by daily newspapers to ascertain what proportion of the population of Britain attends places of Christian worship agree in the following estimates; regular churchgoers - between 15 and 20 per cent; occasional churchgoers - a further two-fifths; non-churchgoers - the other two fifths. This conclusion is drawn by the report, published in "The British Weekly", of the Mass Information Organisation which collated the results of the newspapers' inquiries and compared them with the findings of its own investigators.

"All those who said they went to church did so spontaneously", observes the Report, "and no prestige issue was therefore involved... More than twice as many people in our sample suggest religious conviction as a reason for church-going among other people as suggest it for a reason for their own." It states that the proportion of women to men is slightly higher among churchgoers than among the total population. The "faithful fifth" (regular churchgoers) is evenly distributed among the various groups in the community and it is suggested that the attitudes and standards of such churchgoers are not very clearly distinguishable from those of others.

The proportion of the population shown as ever going to church is; Church of England 60%, Free Churches 20%, Church of Scotland 10%, Roman Catholics 10%. Regular churchgoers; Free Church - twice as big a proportion as Anglicans; Roman Catholics - twice as big a proportion as the Free Churches. Attendance of women; Roman Catholics have largest preponderance, Free Churches the smallest. Free Churches and Roman Catholics draw their members more largely from the lower income groups than the Church of England. Proportion of members under 25 years of age - Roman Catholics have the biggest proportion, Free Churches the smallest. E.P.S.Geneva

CHINA

Distribution of Bibles

The American Bible Society announces that 2,932,682 Bibles, New Testaments and portions of the Bible were distributed in China in 1948, with the help of the American, British and Foreign, and Scottish Bible Societies. E.P.S.Geneva

Meeting of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches met at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva, from February 8 to 10; it was presided over by the Bishop of Chichester (see E.P.S. No. 3). Three of the six presidents of the World Council were present; Dr Marc Boegner, President of the French Protestant Federation, Archbishop Germanos, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Western Europe, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, of the Methodist Church in the United States, as well as nine members of the Executive Committee.

This meeting, the first of the Executive Committee since the constitution of the World Council at Amsterdam, discussed the various aspects of the programme of the World Council in the light of the decisions taken at Amsterdam. It dealt in particular with the important question of evangelism, the life and work of women in the Church, the cooperation of the laity. With a view to strengthening the bonds between the Council and the member Churches, various projects have been decided upon; Pastor Marc Boegner will go to South America, the Bishop of Chichester to Australia and New Zealand, President Martin Niemöller, head of the Foreign Office of the German Evangelical Church, will also go to Australia, and Dr Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council, intends to visit the Far East.

The Committee also discussed matters concerning the meeting of the Central Committee, composed of 90 members, which is to meet in Chichester next July.

The Committee finally issued the following Message to the Churches which are members of the World Council:

"In August 1948, at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, its 150 member Churches solemnly affirmed, in the light of the God-given mission of the Church to the world, the basic principles of human rights and religious freedom. The members of the Executive Committee of the World Council, meeting for the first time since the Assembly was held, find themselves greatly disturbed by the threats to man's rights and freedom which openly or covertly seem to be developing in almost every part of the world.

"In numerous countries of Europe and Asia, governments which claim to guarantee freedom of conscience and religion are in fact denying it. The freedom of the Church to preach the Word of God to all men in all realms of life is restricted. Religious instruction of young people is hindered. Christian youth movements are prohibited. There is interference with the training of the clergy and the appointment of church leaders. Obstacles are put in the way of public evangelism and missionary work. Officers and members of the Churches have been arrested and imprisoned on an ever-increasing scale. In some areas, the Churches face the possibility of the complete disruption of their life as Churches and communities. We see in these measures a deliberate attempt to undermine the witness of the Churches by forcing them either to withdraw completely from public life, or to become the tools of a secular policy.

"In some countries where the tradition of freedom is apparently maintained, increasing government control over the action and thought of people, domination of public policy by military and strategic considerations, and the

infringement of the rights of religious minorities constitute an accumulating menace of which Christians seem to be as yet largely unaware.

"In face of these dangers, we reaffirm the conviction of the Amsterdam Assembly 'that every person has the right to express his religious beliefs in worship, teaching and practice, and to proclaim the implications of his beliefs for relationships in a social or political community', and that 'the nature and destiny of man by virtue of his creation, redemption and calling, and man's activities in family, state and culture establish limits beyond which the government cannot with impunity go'.

"Against tyranny, whether open or covert, and its inevitable consequence in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, sound world public opinion is a strong bulward. The defence of human rights and liberties must be regarded as a matter of international responsibility. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, if taken seriously by the nations and peoples of the world, may mark an important advance in that direction.

"We recognise that Churches living under conditions where freedom as generally understood is jeopardised, are exposed to specially grave temptations. There is, for example, the temptation to defend the old political or social order. But the Church hears the word 'No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God'. Our task is to proclaim the Gospel in the new situation, which, while bringing new difficulties, may, under God, also offer new opportunities. There is also the temptation to leave the world to its fate. But the Church dares not sink back into a self-contained existence. It is called to proclaim the Lordship of Christ in all realms of life and under all forms of government.

"The challenge to certain Churches is a challenge to us all. The peril is a common peril. The Churches which suffer are assured at all times of the prayers of their fellow-Christians. But we see that the obligations of all Christians are in essence the same. It is our duty to build up the local Church in the fellowship of Christ, to develop personal witness to Him, to engage to the full in the service of mankind in its common problems and sufferings. The life of every individual Christian and of every Christian family must be so rooted in Christ that the faith lives on, even though the Church for a period be deprived of every earthly protection, broken into fragments and stripped of everything except its fellowship with its Lord.

"The story of the conflict between the Church and the world is an old story. The very first pages of Church history tell us how 'the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ'. But they tell us also how God answered the prayer of the Apostles. That answer was that 'with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all'. We are assured that what was true in the days of the Apostles is true today."

E.P.S. Geneva

